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NSC BRIEFING 7 June 1955

FRENCH NORTH AFRICA

- I. Although general tension mounting throughout French North Africa, situation different in each of three political divisions.
 - A. In "protectorate" of Tunisia, French have recently concluded agreement with "native" Tunisian government, granting limited home rule.
 - B. Haggling over interpretation of agreement, together with local disorders, likely to complicate and delay transfer of governmental functions from French to Tunisian control.
 - C. Prospect of more self-government for Tunisia encourages nationalist campaign in "protectorate" of Morocco and nominally "metropolitan" Algeria, where security situation steadily deteriorating.
- II. In Tunisia, which has been a French "protectorate" since 1881/3:
 - A. Ponderous series of conventions (signed Paris 3 June) define extent of home rule.
 1. Due for ratification by National Assembly in July; Embassy Paris thinks chances good.
 2. Tunisian approval (by Bey) expected to be automatic.
 - B. Under conventions, France will retain control over Tunisian foreign affairs, defense; will begin to transfer police services (after 5 years); judicial services (after 10 years) to Tunisian control.
 1. In interim, French interests to be protected by High Commissioner's office.

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III. Proposed conventions opposed by:

- A. Reactionary French settler element (principally French members Tunisian civil service). Bureaucrats are exerting maximum possible pressure prevent French Assembly approval.
- B. Extremist wing of otherwise moderate Tunisian Neo-Destour ("constitution") party (under leadership Salah ben Youssef). Extremists have strong ties with Arab League.
- C. Other Tunisians in opposition include small but fanatic Old Destour Party (8,000), and smaller (1,500) ineffective Tunisian Communist Party.

IV. Conventions supported by:

- A. Minority of unorganized French business and professional residents Tunisia.
- B. Majority of 800,000-strong Neo-Destour party, whose president (Habib Bourghiba) has acted as behind-the-scenes guide of compromise settlement. However, Bourghiba has clearly stated conventions only first step toward full independence.
- C. Many French officials privately admit inevitability of Tunisian independence.

D. Implementation of conventions probably will be strife-ridden.

- V. In Algeria, picture complicated by fact that three coastal divisions (Constantine, Algiers and Oran) have been considered departments of France (residents nominally voting citizens) since 1848: Four interior divisions are under military occupation.

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- A. French had to impose state of emergency 7 April: since then guerrilla attacks in eastern Algeria (Constantine) stepped up drastically.
- B. French have reinforced Algeria with more than 20,000 troops, withdrawn from forces committed to NATO--total in Algeria now more than 110,000.

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C.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Army apparently guarding Europeans in towns,

while countryside Moslems unprotected against outlaws.

- D. French-Moslem antagonism increasing steadily and North African native troops can no longer be relied on.
1. Some "captures" of native units believed desertions.
 2. Algerian light infantry units being rotated to Germany, replaced by French units.
- E. French government yielding to extremist settler demands, allowing formation of settler militia--essentially vigilante gangs--to "aid" in police activities.
- F. Essence of problem is that Algerians who seek independence are considered de facto traitors, since French make juridical claim that Algeria c'est la France.

VI. In Morocco, which has been a French "protectorate" since 1912:

- A. Sharp upsurge last two years' terrorism, concentrated Casablanca area, began late May '55. Moslem resentment over [REDACTED] French repressive measures now acute: Europeans in Casablanca said to face danger of massacre.
- B. Paris apparently at last convinced need to solve burning "dynastic issue" by replacing unpopular sultan (Ben Arafa--

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imposed by French August 1953).

C. However, Paris rejects possibility re-enthroning French-deposed Mohamed ben Youssef.

1. French can find no acceptable qualified candidate among many Alaouite princes.

2. May resort to device of Regency Council.

D. No action to better Moroccan conditions probable until after Tunisian conventions approved by French Assembly.

1. Protectorates Minister July, told Foreign Affairs

Commission of French Assembly: "Never has the maxim

'to govern is to choose the lesser evil' been more apt."

VII. North African Nationalists' capabilities difficult to assess.

A. Almost no information available on quantity, type arms available.

B. Weapons captured by French usually light, of World War II or earlier vintage: very few automatic weapons discovered.

C. Nationalists probably doing some smuggling--by sea or overland. Also probably Arab States collaboration.

1. Logistics problem involved makes massive overland supply from Libya or Egypt improbable.

2. Most likely source--"private enterprise" gun-running by sea.

D. Nationalists in different parts of French North Africa probably do not now have sufficient military equipment to launch coordinated rebellion.

1. However, can continue tie down significant portion

France's military strength.

E. Inflammatory radio broadcasts from such disparate points as Cairo, Damascus, Spanish Morocco and Budapest--all in colloquial Arabic--are claimed by France to be major factor in current unrest, disorders.

IX. Outlook colored by variety of factors:

A. More than 200,000 French troops and police in area give reasonable assurance France can maintain some sort of position in North Africa.

B. However, frustrations over course of events in Indochina may make French exaggerate present threat, in hopes of getting unqualified US support.

C. Problem further complicated by anti-Americanism, suspicion US intentions prevalent among French settlers and officials in North Africa who see US ousting French.

1. At same time, American popularity declining among natives; Communists exploiting French use of American arms.

D. Meanwhile, rising terrorism poses threat to all Europeans, including more than 15,000 Americans now in Morocco.

E. Only place where situation likely to improve is Tunisia, where France may avert serious disorders by firm implementation agreed-upon autonomy.

F. Restoration of Algerian Moslem confidence--and to "second-class citizenship" for natives--appears prerequisite to restoration order there.

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